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ABSTRACT

The model presented here is intended to help schools guide the growth of a learner's understanding of cultural diversity; it offers a perspective that allows educators to link the role of the school to the early formative experiences of family and local community, and it utilizes a curriculum responsive to the concerns of that community. The school becomes the site for the learner to come into contact with the similarities and differences within one's own family and community and creates a foundation through these contacts to explore an ever widening circle of relationships. These relationships and the influences of early experiences help to form the learner's self-image and image of the world. The school enlarges these influences, and finally, the learner, broadened by the school experience, returns to influence the community, state, and country. Consequently, the movement in the model begins with the learner and the family, moves outward as the learner enlarges his/her conceptions of society and community, and then moves inward, back to the local level. This outward-inward movement occurs many times as the learner matures and as the learner's experiential base expands and influences the value structure based in the family and immediate community. (Contains 25 references.) (Author/LL)

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DIVERSITY AS CREATIVE PROCESS: FROM CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS TO GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

In a nation and world that is becoming increasingly diverse, school personnel and university staff are becoming more concerned with the school's role in preparing students to meet the challenge of this diversity. How can schools responsibly guide the growth of a learner's understanding about other cultures and help students develop a global ethnic that respects the uniqueness of other cultures? To begin outside the learner's world, in the world of "others" is to create a division between "us" and "them". Such an approach seems inimical to the understanding, unity and respect that are the goals of a successful multicultural program. Another approach, one that begins with the learner and home environment, and explores the diversity that is present in the learner's own community, utilizes curriculum responsive to the concerns of that community even as it links those local concerns to the concerns of larger national and global communities. Such an approach fosters the perspective that diversity is part of "us" as well as "them" and that differences and similarities exist across the borders of class, ethnicity, state, nation and country.

The model presented (see figure 1) offers a perspective that allows educators to link the role of the school to the early formative experiences of the family and local community. The school becomes the site for the learner to come into contact with the similarities and differences of one's own family and community and creates a foundation through these contacts to explore an ever widening circle of relationships. This model is based on the premise that students know their families and those immediately around them first and best. These relationships and influences of these early experiences help to form the learner's self-image image of the world, the school enlarges these influences, and finally, the learner broadened by the school experience, returns to influence the community, state, and country. Consequently, the movement in the model begins with the learner and the family, moves outward as the learner enlarges their conceptions of society and community and then moves inward, back to the local level. This outward-inward movement occurs many times as the learner matures and as the learner's experiential base expands and influences the value structure based in the family and immediate community.

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DIVERSITY AS CREATIVE PROCESS: FROM CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS TO GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

"Today we are forced with the pre-eminent fact, if civilization is to servive, we must cultivate the science of human relationship--the ability of all people, of all kinds, to live together and work together in the same world, at peace."
--Franklin D. Roosevelt

INTRODUCTION

In a nation and world that is becoming increasingly diverse, school personnel and university staff are becoming more concerned with the school's role in preparing students to meet the challenge of this diversity. How can schools responsibly guide the growth of a learner's understanding about other cultures and help students develop a global ethnic that respects the uniqueness of other cultures? To begin outside the learner's world, in the world of "others" is to create a division between "us" and "them". Such an approach seems inimical to the understanding, unity and respect that are the goals of a successful multicultural program. Another approach, one that begins with the learner and home environment, and explores the diversity that is present in the learner's own community, utilizes curriculum responsive to the concerns of that community even as it links those local concerns to the concerns of larger national and global communities. Such an approach fosters the perspective that diversity is part of "us" as well as "them" and that differences and similarities exist across the borders of class, ethnicity, state, nation and country.

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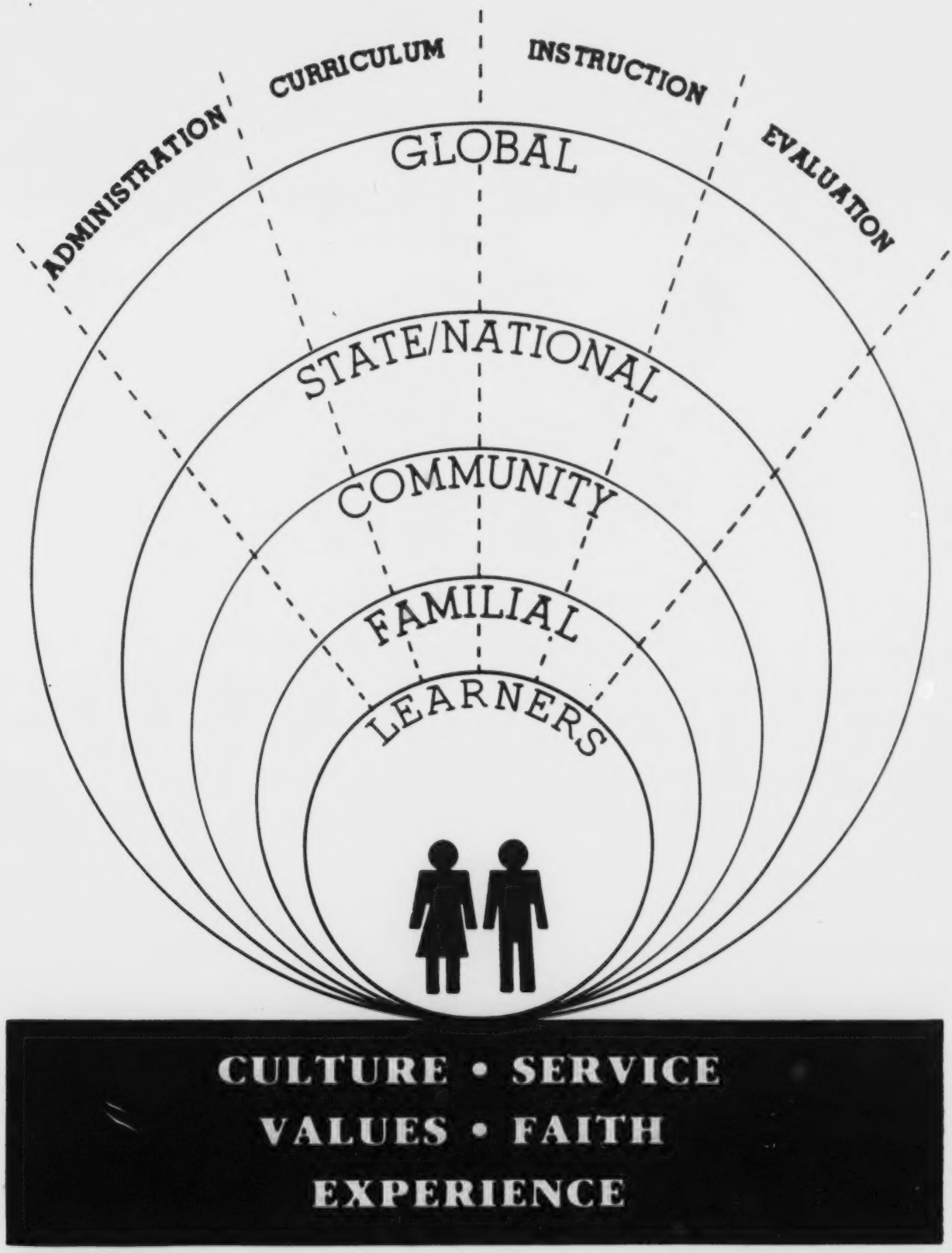
[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

LEARNER AND FAMILY

"As an individual, each of us maintains an image of the behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms--in short, of the culture-appropriate to members of the ethnic group(s) to which we belong. What is learned at home will strengthen the individual's, and later on, the group's identity."

--Franklin D. Roosevelt 1945

The family in American society, as we know it today, is rapidly changing. Alvin Toffler (in The Third Wave) has examined


ADMINISTRATION
CURRICULUM
INSTRUCTION
EVALUATION
GLOBAL
STATE/NATIONAL
COMMUNITY
FAMILIAL
LEARNERS
CULTURE • SERVICE
VALUES • FAITH
EXPERIENCE

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the changing nature of the American family and easily identifies a multiplicity of emerging family forms. He believes no one of these will become a dominant form to replace the nuclear model. Some of the family arrangements include: the aggregate family, the extended family, single-parent families, communes, dual career families, homosexual marriages, tribal grouping among certain ethnic minorities, contract marriages, family clusters, trial marriages, and cottage industry" families. The growing diversity in American family life should be valued and appreciated.

In a similar way, the Digest of Educational Statistics (1992) identifies the diversity of learners in the classroom. Consider the following:

* 5.38 percent of students at the elementary and secondary levels participated in either bilingual or English as a second language programs during 1987-88.
* 7.17 percent of elementary and secondary students participated in programs for the handicapped during 1987-1988.
* 6.50 percent of elementary and secondary students participated in programs for the gifted and talented during 1987-1988.
* In 1991, 8.9 percent of white high schoolers dropped out, while 13.7 percent of the black and 31.1 percent of the hispanic high schoolers dropped out of school.

It is clear that no two individuals have the same set of cultures. Ernest Washington underscores this point: "culture is

not a unitary phenomena, but reflects the differential learning experiences of the individual about the self, caregiver, family, ethnic group, peers, and school. These overlapping learning experiences contribute to that changing set of social relations that shape individual identity." (King, 1989). As our community and national needs change, so must our abilities to create interdependence in human relations and extend ways of coping.

The ability to cope with a rapidly changing world begins at home. The family and the home are vital determinants of the young child's self concept and cognitive style. The family is also the primary influence on the child's formation of concepts, attitudes and values. Parenting behaviors, dominant learning styles, beliefs, values, traditions, and cultural social patterns are all elements that can affect a child's school success. This may be doubly true for those students who are culturally and ethnically different, and whose school success may depend upon their ability to adapt to unfamilar tasks, environments and forms of communication. And, according to Hugh Mehan, school success is not only academic performance. It has to do with the way the teacher and the learner communicate the rules: "School success is not limited to academic matters. Although it is incumbent upon students to display what they know. This involves knowing that certain ways of talking and acting are appropriate in certain contexts, knowing with whom, when and where they can act, and interpreting classroom rules that are often implicit." (1987 p.179 as cited in O'Connor, 1989)

Attitudes and values as well as specific skills learned in

the home environment can prepare students to cope with the diversity they find in school settings without loosing their own sense of culture or self-esteem. A truly successful learner will be able to examine other cultures and ways of thought without being intimidated by them, and will be able to incorporate others values, traditions or ways of thought when appropriate without feeling that their traditional ways are threatened. In addition, the mature learner will be able to choose not to accept certain parts of other cultures without feeling the need to demand that those aspects be banned from society or judged as morally inferior.

The link between home and school begins early. One important meaning of culture is centered in learning. We, as children, have learned how to become members of our culture. This process of learning started at birth and continues into adulthood. What we learn is how to behave, how to perceive, how to think, what to believe in, what to value. The integration and organization of this knowledge becomes our culture. If parents and educators are to instill the culture of our local communities: our ways of thinking, our language and our values, how do we also, at the same time, provide instruction which respects other cultures, beliefs, thought patterns, and value systems?

The process of education is not only the responsibility of the parents and family. Educators also need to develop competencies in teaching multicultural students. But these competencies first begin in their awareness of their own value systems, sets of assumptions, and thinking patterns. This is not

a task educators can accomplish alone, however. A greater acceptance and understanding of the diversity of the family should enable educators to better communicate with parents and other community members. Open communication between the home and school is the beginning of both greater parental involvement in the schools and educators own growth towards a more pluralistic perspective and respect.

John Gatto (1990) echoed the need of parent involvement in the schools by stating, "large scale reform will not work to repair our damaged society and our damage children until we force the idea of "school" open--to include family as the main engine of education.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

"Cultural diversity then, must be made creative in school and society, by weaving together the inter-related principles of freedom, discourse and rationality." (Lynch, 1986, p.7)

Every community in the U.S. is becoming ethnically diverse. Ethnic diversity, by its very nature, directs attention to the role of culture in the individual's transactions with the social world. Monica Heller (1987) provides a useful perspective on the type of culture that distinguishes an ethnic group: "[For members of an ethnic group] shared experience forms the basis of a shared way oflooking at the world; through interaction they jointly construct ways of making sense of experience. These ways of making sense of experience, these beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about the world and how it works underlie what we think of as culture. However culture is not only a set of beliefs and values that constitute our normal, everyday view of

the world; it also includes our normal, everyday ways of behaving. (p. 184 Cited in Ferdman, 1990) Perhaps, what is acceptable behavior for one group, may not be accepted for another group in the same community. In this case, the community needs to be educated to respect differences and individuality.

In addition, each community has to assess its needs and give autonomy to individual schools to implement changes where required. School-based change has strong support in the educational literature of the past 20 years (Bentzen 1974; Goodlad 1975,1984; K. Tye and Novotney 1975). According to Tye (1990), "the tension between centralized and decentralized decision making seems to be one of those never-ending and probably irreconcilable debates in the field of education. The evidence from research and practice indicates that decentralization has great potential for making schools happier and more productive work places for both adults and children. The deep structure of our educational system, however, favors centralization." (p.44)

The author's concern here is not to suggest a uniform structure for schools, but (whether they elect centralization over decentralization in order to make the schools effective) to make cultural diversity creative in schools of every community. According to Lynch (1986)-- "democratic communities need to engage in meaningful discourse with their minorities and to seek to come to terms with those minorities' perceptions of their own reality. The only alternative recourse would be to coercion and that would be fruitless, for it would vitiate the very values

which democratic societies declare that they esteem."

Before learners can develop cultural awareness of others and the flexibility to meet changing needs, the educational process must help students develop an awareness of themselves and their communities. The learner comes to school with a rich collection of experiences. These experiences are often translated into particular skills and abilities (survival skills, for example) and into values such as faith, discipline, or a regard for the elder members of the family. However, learners that live two doors apart in the same community will not have exactly the same experiences. Consequently, each learner's and each family's community and world views will be somewhat different. The challenge for educators is three-fold: to provide learners with the opportunity to examine their life-experiences and the life-experiences of those around them, to reassess the importance and place of various components of those life-experiences and to extend those understandings beyond the immediate community. "If individuals can acquire the tools to better define their cultural identity-by, for example, comparing it with a range of possibilities- then learning about a range of cultural products can be enriching. To do this, the individual who is becoming literate must be encouraged to consider the relationship of what is learned to the self and to the group, by calling attention to the ways in which alternative perspectives on the methods and contents of literacy are possible." (Ferdman,1990 p.185)

According to Cummins (1986), when school succeeds in helping learners acquire the tools and insights necessary to

appreciate both their own cultural identity and the identity of others, a supportive environment is created that empowers members of dominated groups. Consequently, rather than aim for a curriculum that avoids discussions of ethnicity, the goal should be to facilitate the process by which learners are permitted to discover and explore ethnic connections. Attention must be given not to teaching lists of important facts, but to develop individual skill in exploring the relationship of these facts to the self. Learners must be encouraged to discover and decide for themselves in the context of their cultural identity-what information and what values are conveyed. The learner living in a diverse society is not only asking for success in the classroom, but also for a respected social identity. According to Phillip Cohen, "popular racism cannot be tackled by simply giving students access to alternative sources of experience or new means of intellectual understanding; rather it is a question of articulating their lived culture to new practices of representation, which make it possible to sustain an imaginative sense of social identity and difference without recourse to racist constructions." (quoted in O'Connor, 1989, p 62)

TOWARDS A PLURALISTIC CURRICULUM

"The voice of the at-risk and the minority groups in the definitions of texts, curricula, tests, and the learning plan does not only benefit them, it also allows the whole community to benefit from a dialogue over the discourse structures of educational practices."

(O'Connor, 1989, p. 72)

A survey administered by the Educational Testing Service on fourth, eighth, and twelfth-graders found that the learners had surprisingly limited understandings of other countries. ETS also

conducted a national assessment of what college students actually know and perceive about global relationships and measured their comprehension of current global complexities. It was reported that: "Seniors achieved a mean score of 50.5 questions correct out of 101 on the test, showing a considerable lack of knowledge on topics felt to be important by the assessment committee. Significant score differences occurred among seniors in different fields of study. History majors scored the highest (59.3) while education majors-the teachers of tomorrow-scored the lowest (39.8)." (Barrows, T. and Klein, S. 1980 p.12) The need for multicultural curriculum was reemphasized when Lynch (1986) stated: "multicultural education must be informed by a global dimension, and by the formation of creative coalitions with existing initiatives and innovations in curriculum content." (page 5)

"We have developed an idealized image of what students should learn. It is an academic and scholarly image. It is based on a curriculum full of rigor. There are a number of views concerning the particular makeup of this curriculum, but all views emphasize math, science, great literature, and history. These curricula are probably quite appropriate for those students who are able to benefit from them, but we must remember that we can't make all students scholars simply by trying to force them into that mold. We may have the objective of "cultural literacy" but find that we have produced instead social incompetence. In the process of forcing students into such curricular molds, we produce casualties. We must learn to consider each student's individual

ability level. We must learn to honor achievement to potential as much as we honor achievement to the standard imposed by some curriculum and methods. We cannot do this by requiring the same thing for all students. Not all students are, or should be, going to college, and not nearly as many students should be failing and dropping out of school. This means that we must permit students to work at many different levels. Schools also need to attend to more basic objectives. Curricular content needs to attend to helping students function as citizens." (Kronick, 1990)

To maintain success, the learner, the work at school should be congruent with the learner's commitment beyond the school. According to Weise (1989), many school subjects can be taught in ways that emphasize unique products and research rather than standard answers from all learners. This suggests the improvement of the quality of work learners do to advance their competence in various subjects. Authors as diverse as Young, Bernstein, Willis, and Ogbu have shown how schoolwork that is incongruent with a learner's cultural commitments can assault self-esteem. (160) In addition, schools must find ways to ensure that the learner has the ability and the opportunity to examine and reassess what was learned at each level of growth and at each level of interaction. Schools must also realize that the learner is influence by other learners, the family, the community, and the state, as well as by global decisions.

Turkovich and Mueller (1989) questioned, "To what extent does the curriculum provide for examining things in new ways and

making decisions based on different viewpoints?" To succeed in this endeavor, curriculum should include concepts of individuality, cultural patterns, subsistence, social structure, interdependence, communication, exploitation and pluralism." (Weaver, 1988) In other words, the curriculum should account for the fact that the world is rapidly shrinking into a global village as local communities expand into microcosms of the world.

In 1987, a blue-ribbon commission supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, published its final report calling for emphasis in four curricular areas:

* A better understanding of the world as series of interrelated systems: physical, biological, economic, political, and informational-evaluative.
* More attention to the development of world civilizations as they relate to American history.
* Greater attention to the diversity of cultural patterns both around the world and within the United States.
* More training in policy analysis both of domestic and international issues (Study Commission on Global Education 1987).(Quoted in ASCD Yearbook, 1990, p.42)

Early and integrated exposure to pluralistic concepts is the key to successful multicultural programs. At the elementary level, multiculturalism must be a regular part of the daily curriculum, woven into all parts of the child's day. It should be an integral part of the child's regular activities. McCormick (1982) highlighted this idea by saying, "An integrative and interdisciplinary approach to multicultural education helps

children internalize the relationships between the many parts of their environments. This approach gives meaning to the diverse elements in a child's day. It seeks to educate the "whole child" as a unique human being and to provide the opportunity for each child to reach their maximum potential and retain a unique family heritage. Multicultural education which is global prepares learners for an increasingly pluralistic, interdependent, and changing world. Willard Kneip (1986) suggested," a social studies curriculum to include the study of universal values, global, economic, political, ecological, and technological system, global responses to environment human rights, industrial and agricultural development, and the evolution of historical developments."

One motivation to educate learners globally lies in the United States' ever-increasing economic world involvement. "As the United States became more dependent on foreign imports and foreign investment and as United States trade relationships with foreign countries continues to grow, the United States must be able to communicate with foreign nationals. Robert O. Jay at Brigham Young University argues that the United States must reduce cultural barriers to facilitate communication. This can only be done if Americans are able to develop a deeper appreciation for other nation's cultures and attitudes. How we train business leaders, consumers, and citizenry affect national performance. Our business success depends on how effectively educators are able to make the necessary curriculum changes." (Joy, 1987). And according to Cole (1984)," promoting the

understanding of ethnic and foreign cultures, assisting in developing skills for living with diversity, adjustment to future changes, and understanding interrelatedness and interdependence be stressed in the future success of our children." The importance of a global perspective however, is not unique to the United States. Egerton Osunde writes at length on Nigeria's contribution; Chris Brown writes about schools in the United Kingdom; Charles Beine of El Salvador; Hanna Garewicz of Poland; Julius Nuyere of Tanzania; Luisa Fernandez of Brazil; and Ernest Dube of South Africa; all share their contributions to the global education.

The curriculum can serve as a mirror for all learners and give them a balanced view of the world we live in and the development of United States culture and society. It will let learners know that their ancestors were valuable contributors in the development of world civilization. It can provide links to other nations and build foundations for a "world citizenship." As the world becomes more complex, learners will need to be better prepared to look at problems of economics, ecology and politics (among others) as world problems, rather than as national ones, and to think their solutions in terms of a global community.

BEYOND SCHOOLS TO GLOBAL UNDERSTANDINGS

"Instant satellite communication systems have become a part of our everyday life. Events are transmitted instantly. We are affected by what happens anywhere in the world--as it happens. Trade and commerce are also vivid illustrations of an interconnected and interdependent world."

Arakapodavil (1985 p.5)

As learners' and teachers' awareness of their own cultures and the cultures of others increases, so too, must their understanding of a world community. The edge of that community is found in local communities and at the state and national levels, for even local communities and states can have global impacts. Conversely, decisions that are made at the national level will have an impact on all communities and groups. If dissatisfied, groups would use their voice and freedom so that their needs and agendas be included. As differences are voiced, leadership at the national/state level is essential to establishing an ethical base line for democratic pluralism.

That leadership rests with the learners being educated today. If we hope to participate in a global society, then education must be the key. Lynch (1986) makes the following points when arguing for multicultural education: "1) Respect for persons' cannot stop at Dover; 2) Others are building multicultural societies and we can learn from them; 3) The struggle against prejudice and discrimination cannot be a solely national onset; 4) The interdependence of peoples necessitates a global multicultural education; 5) The identification of moral behavior necessitates a supranational context." (p.9) L. F. Anderson (1990) suggested that "most

states have participated in foreign policy--international economic affairs." He further cited the National Governors' Association report which stated that 44 of the nation's governors traveled abroad one or more times in a recent year in search of export markets for the products of their states. Collectively, states spend substantially more on foreign investment promotion than does the federal government. As of 1987, 35 states maintained 84 offices abroad, and both numbers undoubtedly have increased since then." ("Innocents Abroad" 1987). p. 27 So global involvement from a local level has already ocurred. Certainly, increased involvement of United State in a global economy and a new world order has affected state and local economies. The number of foreign learners and other foreign nationals have increased. The latest news is that the immigration office is also selling visas to certain rich individuals to come in and start businesses. Moreover, economists such as Jude Wanniski (1978, 19) emphasized the globalization of the United States' economy by stating: "The world is not fragmented, but integrated which means that every economic event that takes place someplace in the world is felt virtually everywhere in the world. And theories that treat the United States' economy as if it were closed when in fact is in constant interaction with the rest of the world are likely to be deficient or worse."

Robert Reich (1989, 23) also writes:" America itself is ceasing to exist as a system of production and exchange separate from the rest of the world. One can no more meaningfully speak

of an "American economy" than of a "Delaware economy." We are becoming but a region--albeit still a relatively wealthy region--of a global economy, whose technologies, savings, and investments move effortlessly across borders." Arakapodavil (1985) warns that in reference to the United States, a lack of multicultural/global perspectives have adversely affected the country both economically and politically.

It seems, then, that encouragement of dialogue between different cultures and minority groups would be of greatest importance. For when cultural pluralism is recognized, when shared values and norms are practiced, when maximum freedom is allowed to the expression of values, then different cultures of different nations will work together respecting each other's individuality, identity, and heritage. This will eventually lead to international trade, international peace, and international economics. To encourage the dialogue between different cultures and minority groups, Lynch(1986) emphasized the need for shared values, norms, and mores to be generated. lynch adds that discourse, if it is to be real, needs to be structurally inclusive of all cultural groups and to be conducted on a national basis in the context of maximum freedom, i.e. without compulsion or coercion. The importance of the schools in this endeavor has already been argued. However, it is important to understand how our understanding of schools and global education is affected by what happens outside the school's doors. "The deep structure of schooling, that intervening level which is both so slow to change and so powerful in shaping what happens in

schools, is bound to be affected as more and more people--not only the larger community, but also teachers, administrators, parents, and students--learn to think globally as well as locally. It's an exciting time to be involved with schooling." (Anderson, 1990, p. 47)(ASCD)

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